



# NEWS RELEASE

## THE LINCOLN-LANCASTER WOMEN'S COMMISSION

440 South 8<sup>th</sup> Street, Suite 100 • Lincoln NE 68508-2294 • Ph. 441-7716 • Fax. 441-6824

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: May 2, 2003  
FOR MORE INFORMATION: Diane Mullins, PR, 441-7717  
Karl Skinner, PR, 465-2151  
Sandy Johnson, GWISF co-chair, 466-9400  
Nancy Fuchs, GWISF co-chair, 488-1839



### WOMEN'S SPORTS CEREMONY HONORS FEMALE ATHLETES

Six female athletes have been selected for recognition at the 7<sup>th</sup> annual Girls & Women in Sports & Fitness recognition luncheon, "*Succeed in Sport - Lead in Life.*" The awards ceremony is open to the public and will be held at the University of Nebraska Student Union, 14th and R Streets, on Saturday, Feb. 1, 2003, 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. More than 50 female students and 10 community "Athletic Achievers" will also be recognized during the luncheon for their hard work and dedication to their sport and/or fitness program. Tickets are \$10 per person and can be purchased by contacting Vicki Highstreet at the UNL Campus Rec Center, 472-4771.

Keynote speaker, Ms. **Athena Yiamouyiannis**, will highlight the program aimed to support and encourage girls and women in sports and fitness. Yiamouyiannis, the executive director for the National Association for Girls and Women in Sport (NAGWS), is an expert on Title IX and gender equity issues. She has served as an advisor and spokesperson about equity issues on and off the playing fields for colleges, universities, conferences and national organizations. She has addressed the NCAA Coaches Education Summit, NYLC Title IX Debates, NACWAA Fall Forum, Southern Association for Women in Physical Activity and Sport Convention, Bush Administration's Chicago Title IX Hearing, Mt. Holyoke College and Equity in Sport Symposium.

Prior to NAGWS, Yiamouyiannis worked for 10 years at the National Collegiate Athletics Association (NCAA) as its director of membership services. She also supervised the NCAA rules, an education program and served as liaison to the NCAA's Committee on Women's Athletics. She has served on the board of directors for the National Association for Collegiate Women Athletics Administrators and as president of the Executive Women's Golf Association's Indianapolis Chapter.

Yiamouyiannis holds a master's degree in Sports Management and a bachelor's degree in Mathematics from Ohio State University. She competed in varsity cross country and track for the Buckeyes. Athletics Achievements include Varsity Basketball, Cross Country and Track at Olentangy High School - State Champions in Cross Country. Her own best time for the mile run was 5:03 minutes. She placed First in her age category in the Ohio Championship Triathlon (1.2 mile swim, 40 mile bike, 9 mile run) and bicycled up the east coast from St. Augustine, Fla., to Washington DC in 2001. Last year, she took the final plunge and bungee-jumped for the first time in her life.

The local awards luncheon will be held in conjunction with the national Women in Sports Week celebrated Feb. 1 through 7, 2003 nationwide. The top winners are as follows:

Ambassador Award	Debbie Sedlacek
Courage Award	Abby Meyer
Pioneer Award	Doris O'Donnell
Mentor Award	Kristi Nelson-Hitz
Spirit Award	Kristin Carney
Star City Sports Youth Award	Leigh Sutton

**AMBASSADOR AWARD, DEBBIE SEDLACEK, 6701 S. Folsom Ave, 421-1675**

Goals keep **Debbie Sedlacek** focused on her job of molding and instructing women and girls in the sport of Dressage - a particular equestrian riding technique where the horse and the rider become one in thought and movement. Sedlacek, a Nebraska Dressage Association Board member and Madonna volunteer, provides equestrian opportunities in recreational events, Cornhusker State Games, and other competitive meets for women of all ages. She began her career in 1987 at a time when Lincoln wasn't considered a horse community. But with the aid of Lowell Boomer, founder of the United States Dressage Federation, she emerged as a strong leader instrumental in bringing horse clubs and activities to the city. She opens her barn and her expertise to Villa Marie once a month, allowing the children to come work with the horses. Riders experience a boost in their strength, balance, confidence, self esteem and horsemanship. She is an excellent **ambassador**, who remains focused and compassionate, taking each rider's efforts and helping them to develop those efforts to their fullest potential.

**COURAGE AWARD, ABBY MEYER, 7617 Stevens Ridge Rd., 488-7617**

Being a serious "shagger" for the Nebraska Men's Basketball team doesn't steal time away from **Abby Meyer's** other interests, such as taking private tennis and piano lessons or playing percussion in Lux Middle School's jazz band. The honor roll student is seen as an excellent roll model in gym class and her mentors agree that she never gives up regardless of how painful it is. Meyer was born with "hand and feet anomalies," which resulted in two missing fingers on the left hand and one missing finger on the right. She had six surgeries in her first five years of life and she has worn a prosthesis on her right leg since she was 11 months old. On her left leg, she wears a brace. Her parents, Tim and Lisa Meyer, wanted her to feel as if there wasn't anything she couldn't do as a child and they enrolled her in ballet class at age 3. She also attended gymnastics class and she developed a strong optimistic viewpoint of life.

"When she was six months old, I wrote in her baby book about her happy disposition, and how she woke up smiling and went to bed smiling. This still holds true today. In fact, her teachers at Lux say that she carries herself exactly the same way at school," Tim Meyer said. "She has a wonderful attribute of not talking about others, gossiping, or putting other down. She likes to include everyone and never leaves people out."

Abby started taking tennis lessons at the Lincoln Racquet Club at the age of five. She's now in her fifth year and enjoys watching the pro players and developing her own strengths.

"As a parent I feel very blessed to have Abby as my child. She is my hero, and everything I wish I could be," said her mother who looks at her as being a hero because of her day-to-day **courage** she faces in the daily uphill climb to success.

**PIONEER AWARD, DORIS O'DONNELL, 3500 Faulkner Dr., Apt #A-111, 423-5643**

**Doris O'Donnell** has been professionally and personally active in some form of athletics most of her life. The professor Emeritus at the University of Nebraska taught physical education, coached field hockey and women's basketball during the time when our society was trying to define women's role in sports, leadership, teamwork, and athletic success. O'Donnell was a **pioneer** who blazed the trails for other women moving into the coaching and teaching arenas during the mid-1970's. She naturally became a role model and mentor to many young women in the community pursuing sports as a profession. She taught others to take risks, the importance of passion, how to win and how to lose. She defined leadership by her integrity, creativity, ethics and passion for teaching and coaching. O'Donnell and her peers played a key role in assisting with the definition of women sports leaders and what it takes to be one.

**MENTOR AWARD, KRISTI NELSON-HITZ, 3608 Hartley Circle, 438-4666 or 436-1536 (LHS)**

Lincoln High School Coach **Kristi Nelson-Hitz** has earned the recognition of being an excellent **mentor** to female athletes. A graduate of Northeast High School, she went on to play volleyball at University of Nebraska-Omaha where she attained a degree in education. She began teaching in the Lincoln Public Schools and is presently in her fifth year at Lincoln High School as health/physical education and her 13<sup>th</sup> year as head volleyball coach. She is also director of the Star City Volleyball Club and plays in a city recreation league. As head volleyball coach, she has compiled more than 200 wins. Her teams have finished seasons ranked in the top 10 seven times, and she has coached 25 all-conference players and 12 all-state honorees.

"Kristi is a strong advocate for the rights of young women in the athletic setting. She promotes athletic equality through her actions and deeds," said Larry Parker, athletic director at Lincoln High School. "Kristi will not hesitate

to step forward if she feels there are ways that the girls' programs can be improved. She is willing to put forth her own time and effort to help provide the best venue for girls' athletics."

Winning teams and excellent female athletes come from outstanding coaching, and Nelson-Hitz motivates her students to exceed self-imposed limitations. She helps her students understand the relationship between succeeding on the court and succeeding in life. Her dedication to fitness and health, and her ability to connect with youth make her an exceptional and supportive coach.

**SPIRIT AWARD, KRISTIN CARNEY, 3140 91<sup>st</sup> St., Lincoln, 486-4908**

**Kristin Carney**, 18, is an extraordinary young lady who loves golf and soccer, and has risen to the top as a scholar and athlete in a very unique family situation. One parent commutes to work in Boston while the other works in California. Yet, she has a solid support system in her home as her grandparents stay close by during the workweek.

The Waverly High School senior suffered a severe knee injury in her junior year during an indoor soccer game. Extensive surgery and hours of painful rehabilitation were necessary to get her back into shape, and return to the field for one more year. Carney was determined to pursue her goals. Her comeback resulted in setting seven new school records, winning the Eastern Midlands Conference, becoming the medalist at the State meet for Class B and setting a new all-class 18-hole score record with a round of 72. She displayed confidence all season without ever complaining about her nagging injury. Her perseverance and courage remained true to the **spirit** of athletics.

**STAR CITY SPORTS YOUTH AWARD, LEIGH SUTTON, 4000 S. 59<sup>th</sup> St. Court, 483-6284 (w) 489-8838**

As a member of the Pius X High School golf team, **Leigh Sutton** has shown considerable dedication to improving her game of golf. An honor roll student deemed "Outstanding Sophomore English Student" of the year, she has won District Honors each year and placed in the top five at every competition, winning a majority of golf tournaments. Selected as the Nebraska Golf Association's "Girl Junior Golfer of the Year and All Star Team Member 2002," she heads up a winning list of achievements as the **Star City Sports Youth** Athlete of the Year.

For more than eight years, Sutton has proven herself to be the most honest, dependable and hard working young golfer he has ever seen, said Dave C. Malone, her private golfing instructor and PGA Master Golf Professional with the Country Club of Lincoln. She prepares herself scholastically and mentally for life and watches every detail to be successful at golf or any physically challenging sport. She continually strives to improve her game, learn new shots and improve her swing to play the highest level of golf.

Daughter of Dr. Gregory E. Sutton and Dr. Margaret Kontras-Sutton, some of her achievements include first place in Class A State High School Championships as a junior, first place in 2001 and 2002 in State Junior Girls Stroke Play Championship.

Sutton is also a very self-motivated and competitive varsity tennis player. Last season, she won the Ralston Invitational No. 2 singles and reached the quarterfinals of the Nebraska State High School Tournament.